

READING AND LISTENING



1. How much do you know about the discovery of America? Take this quiz to find out.

1. Where did Columbus come from?
 - a. Italy
 - b. Spain
 - c. Portugal
2. When did he become a sailor?
 - a. at 21
 - b. at the age of 16
 - c. when he was 10
3. What was he trying to find?
 - a. America
 - b. India
 - c. Japan
4. Who were the first Europeans in America?
 - a. the Spanish
 - b. the Portuguese
 - c. the Scandinavians



2. Now listen to an article and check your answers to the quiz.

Christopher Columbus was born in Genoa, a famous city in Italy. In one of his writings, he says that he became a sailor at the age of 10! As he was growing up, he was turning into an ambitious and brave young man. His dream was to reach India by sailing to the west. The king and queen of Spain were persuaded to give him ships as he promised to find a new route to India and China. New lands, spices and gold were also promised by him.

His voyages were often long and arduous. He had to get by with only his sails, the power of the wind and his compass. Don't forget that there were no engines, radio communication or GPS devices at that time! While Columbus and his sailors were crossing the Atlantic Ocean, they came up against storms, waves and strong winds.

On 12 October 1492 one of his sailing ships anchored in a small port in the Bahamas – that was his first contact with the New World. The coasts of South and Central America were discovered by Columbus during his journeys. Moreover, the beautiful Caribbean islands were explored and colonised by him and his men. He called them 'the West Indies' because when he arrived there, he thought he had reached India! In his diary he wrote the following:

Today something amazing happened. We were sailing to the west when we finally saw land. I shouted 'Hurray! Look, my men! There is land!' As soon as we got close to the coast, we started laughing and dancing. Everyone was very excited. But I was starting to think that this place wasn't a part of the West Indies. Perhaps it was a new world...

Columbus has been getting all the attention ever since, but in fact he wasn't the first European in America. It is little known that the Vikings had arrived there 500 years earlier and a settlement had been built by them, surviving for a decade or so. Yet life on that continent was hardly disturbed by the Vikings' short-lived presence. On the other hand, its later colonisation was a catastrophe for the Indians as most of them died from European diseases and violence. Columbus Day is officially considered a holiday in the USA today, but Native Americans have little reason to celebrate!